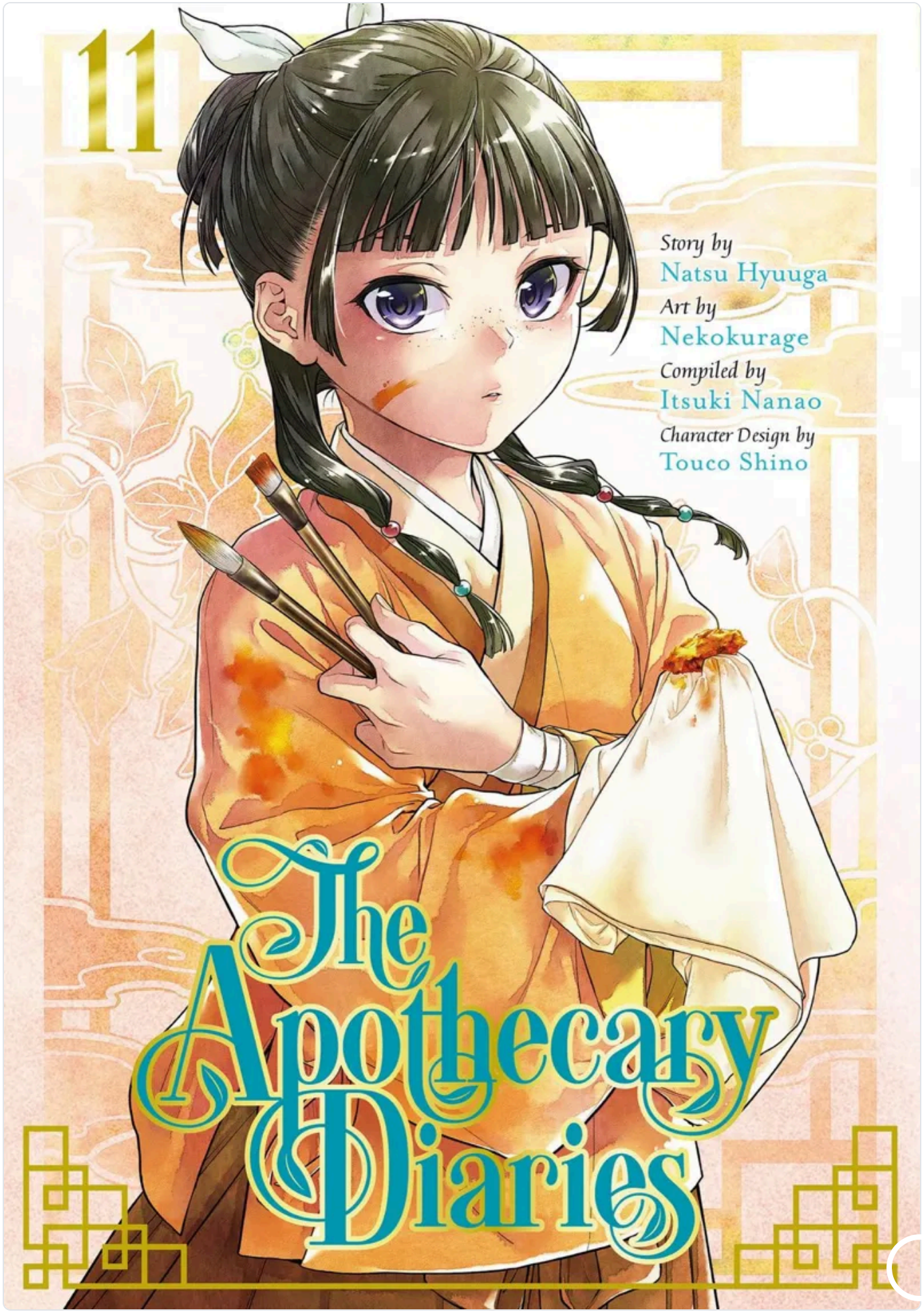
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The Apothecary Diaries

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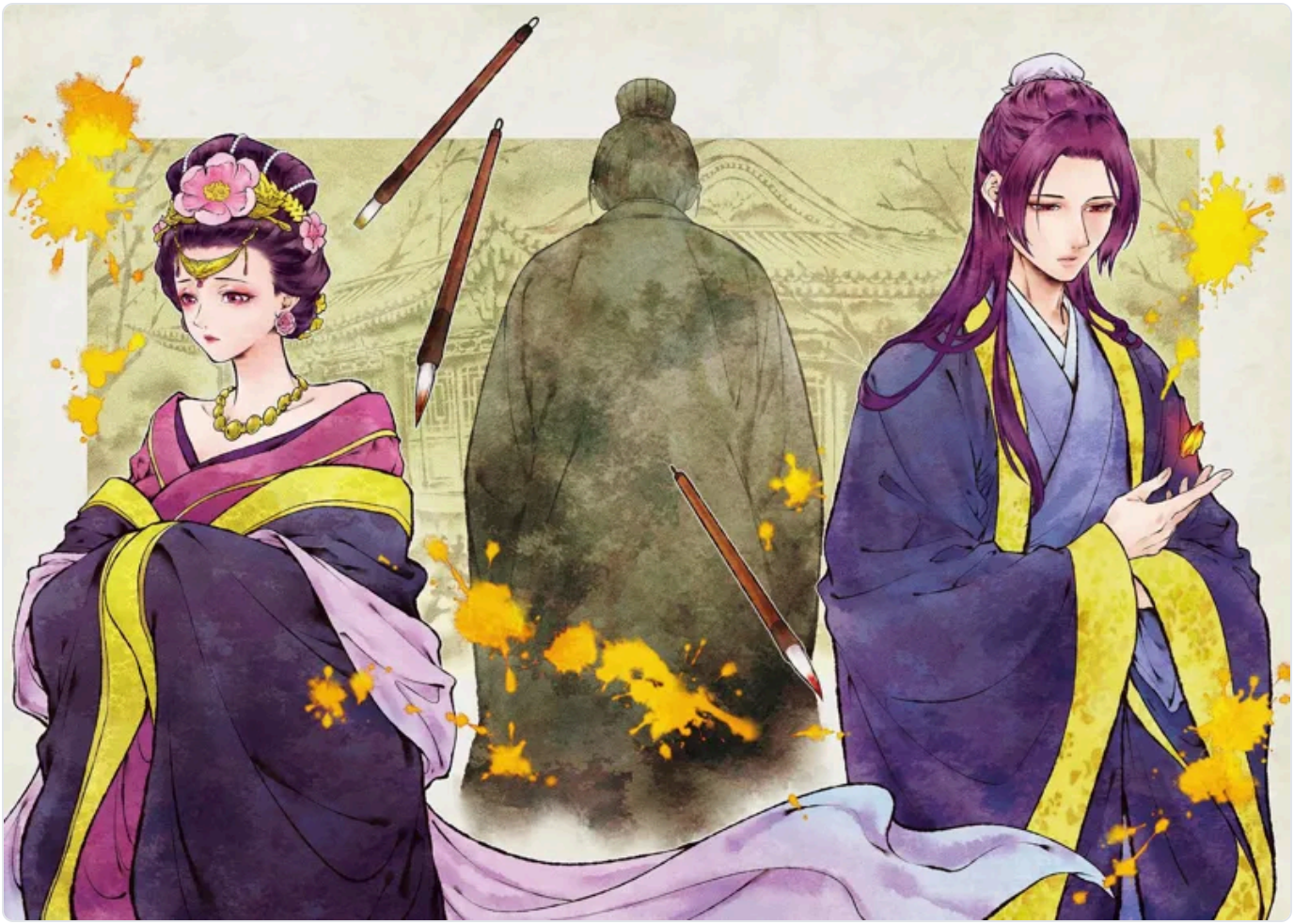

The Apothecary Diaries

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MAY WE PLEASE ...
...GO THROUGH THE SHRINE ONE MORE TIME?
Chapter 54 The Shrine of Choosing ②

THE ONLY WOMEN TO HAVE BEEN BROUGHT ALONG ON THIS JOURNEY THROUGH THE SHRINE BEFORE...
...WERE PRINCESSES AND CONSORTS.
I GAVE YOU LEAVE TO JOIN US LAST TIME AS ONE OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY'S CHOSEN ATTENDANTS...
...BUT ALLOWING SOMEONE WITH NO RELATION TO THE IMPERIAL LINE TO HAVE A SAY ON THE SELECTION OF THE DOORS IS ANOTHER MATTER ENTIRELY.
OR DO YOU BELIEVE YOURSELF SOMEHOW QUALIFIED, YOUNG LADY?
THEN I SHALL JUST HAVE TO TAKE HER AS A CONSORT!
!
CONVINCING LAKAN WILL BE NO MEAN FEAT, I FEAR...
...BUT YOU WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTIONS THEN, CORRECT?
PLEASE REFRAIN FROM SUCH JESTS, YOUR MAJESTY!

JUST THINK OF THE LOOKS YOU'D GET FROM YOUR OTHER CONSORTS!
THIS RELAXED SIDE IS SOMEWHAT DIFFER-ENT...
...FROM THE ONE WE SEE AT THE JADE PALACE.
HA!
HA!
HA!
TRUE ENOUGH!
NOTHING LESS THAN A BUST OF 90 CENTI-METERS...
...WILL AROUSE THE EMPEROR'S PASSIONS.

IN THAT CASE...
...YOU TAKE THE GIRL THROUGH IN MY STEAD.
ARE YOU SURE?
SHE APPEARS TO HAVE A THEORY SHE'S KEEN TO TEST...
...AND I MYSELF AM VERY KEEN TO KNOW WHAT THAT IS.
SIGH...
.....AS YOU WISH, SIRE.

WHAT AN ODDLY MERCURIAL FELLOW, OUR EMPEROR.
ORDINARILY, IT WOULD BE HIGHLY IMPROPER FOR JINSHI...
...TO WALK IN FRONT OF THE EMPEROR WHEN HE ISN'T EVEN SERVING AS A GUIDE...
...TO SAY NOTHING OF CHOOSING DOORS IN THIS IMPERIAL RITE OF PASSAGE.
ギィ CREEEEAK
不得穿过红门

不得穿过红门
THE BLUE ONE.
WHICH DOOR SHOULD WE PICK?
CREAK
不得穿过黑门
THE WHITE DOOR.
NOW WHICH?

THE CHOICES ALREADY DIFFER FROM MINE.
HMM.
THIS IS THE TENTH ROOM.
WE DIDN'T GET THIS FAR LAST TIME.

汝得选
择红门
"THOU SHALT CHOOSE THE RED DOOR."
A WHITE, A BLACK, AND A GREEN DOOR.
WHICH MEANS ...
BUT THERE'S NO RED DOOR HERE.
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?

YOUR ANSWER LIES BEYOND THE GREEN DOOR.
VERY WELL.
CREAK
CREAK

WE...
WE'RE ...!

YOU HAVE CHOSEN THE CORRECT PATH.
CONGRAT-ULATIONS.
WHEN NONE COULD WORK OUT THE TRUE PATH...
IN OLDEN TIMES, IT WAS THE DUTY OF HE WHO HAD EARNED THE QUEEN MOTHER'S BLESSING TO TAKE UP THE CROWN...
...WITH A CONSORT WHO COULD PICK HER WAY CORRECTLY THROUGH THE SHRINE AT HIS SIDE.
...A PRO-SPECTIVE RULER WAS PERMITTED TO TRY AGAIN...
...WHICH WAS THEN THE HIGHEST POINT IN THE CITY.
...AND ADDRESS THE PEOPLE FROM ATOP THE ROOF OF THIS SHRINE...

BUT AS WE CAN SEE, IT WAS SOMEONE ELSE ENTIRELY WHO COMPLETED THE RITE THIS TIME.
YOU GOADED ME IN THE FIRST PLACE.
LAY OFF, OLD MAN.
NATURALLY, THIS IS TO BE ACCOM-PLISHED...
...BY SOMEONE OF THE QUEEN MOTHER'S BLOOD-LINE.
NEVER MIND THAT. I DEMAND AN EXPLA-NATION.
PERHAPS YOU SHOULD ASK HER INSTEAD.
LEAVING ALL THE HARD STUFF TO ME, EH?
YOU HEARD THE MAN!
17

不得穿过红门
GREEN
88
RED
83
BLUE
88
VERY WELL. I SHALL EXPLAIN MY CRITERIA FOR SELECTING THE DOORS.
IN THE FIRST ROOM...
...THERE WAS A BLUE, A RED, AND A GREEN DOOR, ALONG WITH A SIGN THAT READ, "DO NOT PASS THROUGH THE RED DOOR."
THUS, I CHOSE THE BLUE ONE.
THE GREEN DOOR SHOULD'VE ALSO BEEN A VALID OPTION, GOING BY THE SIGN.
HOWEVER, THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE...
...WHO CANNOT DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE COLORS RED AND GREEN.
THERE ARE?
YES.

...THEY'D PICK THE DOOR THEY KNEW FOR A FACT WAS NOT RED.
AND BECAUSE THEY CANNOT...
THE SAME GOES FOR THE NEXT ROOM.
IF SOMEONE WAS UNABLE TO TELL THE BLACK AND RED DOORS APART, THEY WOULD PICK THE WHITE ONE.
AT FIRST GLANCE, EACH RIDDLE APPEARS TO HAVE TWO CORRECT ANSWERS...
...BUT IN TRUTH, THERE IS ONLY ONE.
SO BECAUSE THEY COULD CORRECTLY IDENTIFY THE WHITE AND THE BLACK DOORS...
...THEY'D HAVE PICKED THE GREEN DOOR IN THE LAST ROOM?
EXACTLY.

I BELIEVE THE FINAL DOOR WAS MADE GREEN...
...BASED ON THE KNOWL-EDGE THAT THOSE WHO HAD REACHED THE LAST ROOM...
...WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RED AND GREEN.
...SO WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?
THE PROOF THAT ONE IS BOTH A CHILD OF THE QUEEN MOTHER AND THE SHRINE'S CHOSEN...
...IS THAT THEY ARE COLOR-BLIND.

THE CONDITION AFFLICTS MEN MORE THAN WOMEN, ACCORDING TO PA.
ONE IN EVERY TEN MEN ARE BORN THIS WAY IN THE WEST.
WHILE IT MAY IMPACT THEIR DAILY LIVES...
...THEY GRADUALLY LEARN HOW TO COPE WITH IT, AND THE PEOPLE AROUND THEM ARE NONE THE WISER.
RED
GREEN
IT'S RARE IN OUR COUNTRY ...
...BUT I'M TOLD THAT SOME PEOPLE IN THE WEST...
...ARE BORN WITH THE INABILITY TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN RED AND GREEN.
ACCORDING TO THE FOUNDING LEGEND...
...THE QUEEN MOTHER WAS ABLE TO SEE FAR AND WIDE IN THE DARK, RIGHT?
I HAVEN'T INVESTIGATED THIS MYSELF ...
...BUT I HAVE HEARD THOSE WHO HAVE TROUBLE MAKING OUT COLORS ...
...CAN SEE BETTER IN THE DARK BECAUSE OF IT.

WHEN TRAITS THAT ADVERSELY IMPACT DAILY LIFE ARE PASSED FROM PARENTS TO CHILDREN...
...THE CHILDREN ALSO OFTEN INHERIT THEIR PARENTS' EXCEP-TIONAL QUALITIES.
I THINK PERHAPS THAT IS THE REASON THIS SHRINE WAS BUILT TO CHOOSE THE NEXT RULER.
IF NONE IN LINE FOR THE THRONE COULD COMPLETE THIS RITE OF PASSAGE ...
...THEN HE WHO WISHED TO RULE WOULD NEED TO TAKE A CONSORT OF WESTERN BLOOD LIKE THAT OF THE QUEEN MOTHER.
THAT MUST BE WHY CONSORTS ARE GIVEN LEAVE TO ENTER.
THE LEGEND SAYS THE QUEEN MOTHER CAME FROM A FARAWAY LAND.
IT MUST HAVE BEEN QUITE DIFFICULT FOR HER AND HER PEOPLE TO MIGRATE TO A NEW PLACE...
...WHILE BEING COLOR-BLIND.
IN THE STORY, THE QUEEN MOTHER HAD NO HUSBAND...
...BUT SHE LIKELY MARRIED THE CHIEF OF THIS LAND.

IT WAS NOT UNUSUAL FOR A LOCAL LEADER TO TAKE A FOREIGNER AS HIS WIFE...
...TO HELP DILUTE A BLOODLINE THAT HAD BECOME CONCENTRATED THROUGH GENERATIONS OF INTERMARRIAGE.
THAT WOULD EXPLAIN WHY THIS COUNTRY PRIORITIZES THE MALE LINE OF SUCCESSION.
HOWEVER, THE QUEEN MOTHER AND HER RETAINERS WERE AGAINST THIS.
THUS, THEY DEVISED A MEANS TO ENSURE THAT HER BLOODLINE...
...WOULD CONTINUE TO FLOW THROUGH THE LEADERS OF THE NATION—
THIS SHRINE.

...AND ALL THAT REMAINED WAS THE TALE OF THE QUEEN MOTHER, NOW REGARDED AS FACT.
EVENTUALLY, THOSE WHO HAD BEEN PRESENT AT THE TIME TURNED TO DUST...
WHAT A PEACEFUL AND PATIENT WAY TO USURP A THRONE.
...HER PEOPLE BECAME THE HEART OF THE POPULATION, BEQUEATHING THEIR SKILLS THROUGH THE GENERATIONS.
BY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THEIR FOREIGN ARTS...
IN THE PROCESS, THEY CRAFTED THE LEGEND OF THE QUEEN MOTHER...
...AND PASSED IT DOWN ORALLY, WHERE THE TRUTH GENTLY GREW BENT.

...I WOULD NEVER GO SO FAR AS TO ACTUALLY SAY ALL THAT OUT LOUD.
BUT...
SO YOU MEAN TO SAY THAT THE QUEEN MOTHER'S BLOOD DOES NOT FLOW THROUGH MY VEINS?
MY MOTHER WAS NOT RELATED TO THE EMPEROR.
NOR MY GRAND-MOTHER, THE EM-PRESS.
SHAKE
SHAKE
THE SHRINE MERELY CHECKS WHETHER ONE IS COLOR-BLIND.
WHILE A PARENT MAY HAVE THAT TRAIT, THERE ARE CASES...
...IN WHICH IT IS NOT PASSED ALONG TO THE CHILD.

IT WOULD BE A DIFFERENT STORY IF THE EMPEROR'S MOTHER HAD BEEN UNFAITHFUL ...
...BUT THERE'S NO WAY OF REALLY KNOWING.
MOREOVER, WHEN A BLOODLINE GROWS TOO CONCENTRATED, IT HAS THE ADVERSE EFFECT OF WEAKENING THE BODY.
IN ADDITION TO THE LATE EMPEROR'S SIBLINGS DYING IN AN EPIDEMIC...
...MANY OF HIS OTHER RELATIONS WERE ALSO FELLED BY DISEASE.
PERHAPS THIS WAS THE COST...
...OF SELECTIVELY PRIORITIZING THE BLOODLINE TO BE CHOSEN BY THE SHRINE.
I'M IMPRESSED A GIRL AS YOUNG AS YOURSELF WAS ABLE TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY.
CLAP ぱち
CLAP ぱち
CLAP ぱち

IT IS SAID THAT THE QUEEN MOTHER CAME TO RULE THIS LAND...
...BECAUSE SHE WAS EXTRAORDINARILY INTELLIGENT.
I CAN'T IMAGINE ...
...SHE'D HAVE THOUGHT TO BUILD THIS SHRINE TO ENSURE HER BLOODLINE IF SHE HADN'T BEEN.
PERHAPS YOU SHOULD CONSIDER ADDING THIS LASS TO YOUR HAREM, AFTER ALL.
HUNH?
HA!
HA!
HA!
THIS OLD COOT ...
... BETTER WATCH HIS MOUTH.

THERE ARE MANY WHO WOULD NOT LOOK KINDLY UPON THAT.
NOW THERE'S A THOUGHT!
I'D PREFER NOT TO COUNT LAKAN AMONG MY ENEMIES, THOUGH.
HOW RUDE...
BESIDES WHICH, SHE NEEDS TO FILL OUT ANOTHER 15 CENTIMETERS OR SO IN THE CHEST TO BE MORE TO MY LIKING!
?
STARE
28

PLEASE DO TAKE THE UTMOST CARE.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME.
I AM AWARE, YOUR MAJESTY.
...IT IS YOU WHO MUST TAKE CARE.

WELL ...
... WHAT-EVER.
I'M STARTING TO THINK HE'S MORE THAN SIMPLY A FAVORITE OF THE EMPEROR'S.
JUST WHO IS JINSHI?
IGNO-RANCE IS BLISS AND ALL THAT.
HOWEVER, I HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING AT THE TIME...
...THAT I WOULD COME TO DEEPLY REGRET THIS A FEW DAYS LATER.